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The Hon'ble Mr. Balkrishna Sahay.

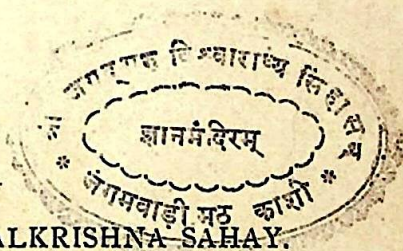
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THE VEDIC DEVAS.

BY

THE HON'BLE MR. BALKRISHNA SAHAY.



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SARASWATI, M.A., D.L. D.Sc. C.S.I., &c., &c.

FOR

THE INTEREST HE TAKES IN ADVANCEMENT OF

SANSKRIT LEARNING

THIS

PAMPHLET

IS

with kind permission respectfully dedicated:

The author.

PREFACE.



Sometime ago brother Naresh Chandra Mitra M.A., M.B. drew my attention to an article in a Magazine on Vedic Gods and asked me to expound the true Vedic theory on the subject. I am glad I have been able to write out a few pages and I place it before the public. If it satisfies my readers I shall feel amply rewarded.

BHAKTI NIKETAN, }
RANCHI. }

BALKRISHNA SAHAY.

ERRATA.

Page	Line	Read	For
5	25	UPANISHADS	UPANISHATS.
10	9	क्रोडति	क्रडति
12	9	and the sun	and the the sun
14	13	देवम्	देवम्
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VEDIC DEVAS.

FOREWORD.

The use of the term *Deva* (देव) in the Vedas, both in singular and plural, has, as to its true interpretation, cast many a scholiast into a crucible of doubt. The use in the plural specially has led many to believe that the Vedas inculcate the worship of innumerable Gods and Goddesses. Starting with an unvedic meaning of the term the pitfalls in the way of the Vedic students were many and they could not but find debased polytheism, Kathenotheism, Henotheism and even element worship in the Vedas. Some have advanced the theory that the *Devas* indicate the allegorical representations of the attributes of the Supreme Being: while others opine that *Devas* are separate created entities and are something like connecting links between men and God. Not only the Western Scholars but even some of our Indian savants have shared the same belief and have fallen into the same error. While admitting that there are a few (?) monotheistic hymns, which, however, according to their views they find only towards

the end of Rig Veda, they aver that "the Rig Veda Samhita from the beginning to the end speaks of many Gods." Writing about the *Devas* Professor Max Muller in his Hibbert Lectures says: "No word seems more incongruous for all these beings than Gods and deities. To use our own word for God in the plural, is itself a logical solecism, as if we were to speak of two centres of a circle." He, in another place, in the same work, writes: "This is the peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion which I tried to characterise as Henotheism or Kathenotheism, a successive belief in single supreme Gods. In order to keep it distinct from that phase of religious thought which we commonly call polytheism, in which the many Gods are already subordinated to one Supreme God ***." Macdonell in his History of Sanskrit Literature says: "The higher Gods of the Rig Veda are almost entirely personifications of natural phenomena such as Sun, Dawn, Fire, Wind". Fraser holds the same view and writes in his Literary History of India:—"The deity at its highest is some personified phenomenon of nature".

The number of Devas is another puzzle that taxes the brain of the present-day commentators.

Gods are according to some thirty three, or even three hundred three thousand and thirty nine. Mr. A. C. Sen has divided them into three classes. Says he:—"Under the first group I have placed such Gods as have a physical basis behind them—the *Naturbedeutung* of the German scholars. These Gods are natural physical objects personified under the animistic belief. They may also be called mythological Gods. Most of the Rig Veda Gods are of this nature. *Dyaus*, the sun and its different aspects, the moon, the wind, the celestial ocean and its waters, the dawns, the lightening, the earth, *Agni*, the rivers, *Varuna* and *Aditi* belong to this group. In my second group I have placed the Hero Gods—ancient sacrificers, Aryan leaders and other prominent persons who were deified after their death. They have been mentioned as the कर्त्तृदेवाः in the Bri : Ar : Upanishad वे कर्त्तृणा देवत्वं अभिसम्पद्यन्ते who attained to Godhead by pious work सुकृति. I have tried to prove that *Vivasvan*, *Yama*, *Trita*, *Indra*, the *Maruts*, the *Ribhus* &c. belong to this class. Lastly in my third group I have placed certain Gods who may be called the Abstract Gods—powers of the Gods, mental states, abstract ideas &c. personified. *Dhata*, *Gradhā*, *Manu* &c. belong

to this class." Mr. Sen further writes:—"The Rig Veda speaks of the "former" and "the latter Gods"; of the "old" and the "new" Gods. Generally speaking the physical Gods are the oldest and the Abstract Gods the youngest; the Hero Gods having an intermediate position." Further on Mr. A. C. Sen comes to the conclusion that the *Dyaus* and the Earth are oldest Gods in the Vedic pantheon. That is, that at one time they were the only Gods worshipped. He distinctly says:—"Monotheism came at the end of the Rig Veda period and not before." His view is "that the Rig Vedic religion began with the worship of Dawn—the Heaven—at a time when—ancestors of the Indo-Aryans, the Latins and the Greeks lived together." These theories are of course not new. Mr. Sen has only followed the western writers.

Some scholars find in the Vedas a history of particular persons and divide them into many periods. All these misconceptions—as I shall later on prove them to be—are caused by the commentators starting with wrong notions and with a biased or prejudiced mind, either forgetting or ignoring the prime canon of Vedic interpretation. They lose sight of the fact that

the Vedic terms are used in their *Youngika* (derivative) meanings. It is really very surprising that while holding with regard to certain hymns that "every word retains something of its radical meaning," also that "they never appear as appellations nor yet as proper names" Max Muller forgets this rule when interpreting other hymns: We say, is it not very strange that having once seen that the Vedic terms are used in their etymological meanings he should forget it only to find that "it would be tedious to translate many specimens of what I consider the poetry of the secondary age, the *mantra* period." The reason is not far to seek. He approaches the Vedas with some preconceived notions, divides them into periods, CHHANDA period and MANTRA period, and considers certain MANTRAS of the "secondary age" and then finds that the etymological meanings would not suit him and his views.

Most of the Indian commentators borrow their knowledge from the writings of Western scholars and have therefore lapsed into the same error. If they would take the trouble of studying PANINI and PATANJALI, the UPNISHATS and the BRAHMANAS, and the six philosophies of the Aryans,

they would at once realise how far they are from the true interpretation of the Vedas. Says Sir William Hamilton, the father of English Philosophy:—"that the mind of an enquirer after truth should be free from all preconceptions and pre-occupations." Nothing can be truer than this and this is just the frame of mind Vedic student ought to possess before he undertakes to interpret the Vedas. How could there be an honest enquiry with a pre-determined mind ?

PANINI the greatest Sanskrit Grammarian, PATANJALI his commentator, YASKA author of the Nirukta, all in one voice declare that the Vedic terms are *Yougikas* (having etymological meanings). There is no reason why this rule should be ignored when interpreting the term under consideration. Even Max Muller in his Hibbert Lectures, page 214, says:—"Its etymological meaning being forgotten *deva* became a mere name for all those bright powers and the same word lives on in the Latin *deus* and in our deity." In the same work, pages 4 and 5, the German Professor writes:—Before the Aryan languages separated * * * there existed in them an expression for light, and from it, from the root *diva*, to shine, the adjective *deva* had been formed, meaning

originally bright. Afterwards *deva* was applied as a comprehensive designation to all the bright powers of the morning and the spring, as opposed to all the dark powers of the night and the winter : but when we meet with it for the first time in the literary documents, it is already so far removed from this its *primitive etymological* meaning, that in the Veda there are but few passages where we can with certainty translate it still by bright. The bright dawn is addressed in the Vedas as *deviushas*, but it must remain doubtful whether the old poets still felt in that address the etymological meaning of brightness, or whether we ought not to translate *deva* in the Veda, as *deus* in Latin, by God, *however difficult we may find it to connect any definite meaning with such a translation*. Still, what we know for certain, is that *deva* came to mean "God" because it originally meant 'bright'

* * * * *

So Prof. Max Muller saw that *deva* was derived from *diva*, to shine and originally meant 'bright.' But he saw no further, and had to surmise and conjecture, had to feel "difficulty in connecting any definite meaning." It were better if he stopped there and attempted no explanation of his own.

If his interpretations are correct, then certainly the Vedas teach debased polytheism, nay Hethen-
otheism and even all base superstitions 'insulting
to the one true God ;' and as such should be
shunned. But we ask ourselves, is it so ? Let us
correctly study the meanings of the term *deva*
and we feel sure our very grave doubts will be
removed. Through this pamphlet we propose to
place before our readers the etymological mean-
ings of the term *deva* and then quote certain
hymns where the term has been used in the Vedas,
and to explain the sense in which it has been
used in those places quoting reference in support
of the correctness of our conclusions.

ETYMOLOGY

Let us first take up and consider the etymology of the term *deva*. The word is derived from the root *diva* (दिव) which according to PANINI (vide Dhātupāṭha) has ten meanings :—

दिव क्रीडा विजिगीषा व्यवहार द्युतिस्तुति मोदमद स्वप्न कान्ति गतिष्व ।

Divā means (1) क्रीडा—to operate (2) विजिगीषा—to wish to conquer (3) व्यवहार—to transact or work (4) द्युति—to shine (5) स्तुति—to praise (6) मोद—to rejoice (7) मद—to punish (8) स्वप्न—to be sleepy (9) कान्ति=beauty, and (10) गति which has three meanings (10/1) ज्ञानं to know (10/2) गमनं to move and (10/3) प्राप्त्य to receive.

In Wilson's Sanskrit English Dictionary we find देव m. 1. a deity, a god, 2. a king, in poetical language. 3. A husband's brother : see देव 4. A cloud, 5. A fool, a dolt, 6. A child, 7. A man following any particular line or business. 8. A spearman, a lancer, 9. Emulation, wish to excel or overcome. 10. Sport, play, 11. A term or surname applicable to a Brahman ; also to a man of the Kayastha class. " (वं) an organ of sense &c. &c". Wilson derives the term from दिव to play (in heaven &c.)

Pandit Tara Nath Tarkayachaspati in his

lexicon gives the following meanings to the term after deriving it from *diva* : 1. अमरं सुरे (Immortal deity) 2. राजान (king) 3. स्वये (sovereign) 4. मेघ (cloud) 5. इन्द्रिये (organ of sense) 6. पारदे (mercury) 7. ब्राह्मण नामुपाधिमेदे (surname to a Brahman) 8. देवदारुणि (a species of pine) 9. पूज्ये (venerable) 10. दीप्ति (light or beauty) 11. परात्मनि (God).

The compiler of Shabdakalpadruma derives *deva* from *diva* दौव्यति आनन्दे कृडति (merrily playing) and interprets it as follows : 1. देवता (deity) 2. राजा (King) 3. मेघः (cloud) 4. पारदः (mercury) 5. ब्राह्मण नामुपाधिमेदः (Surname to a Brahman) 6. ऋत्विक् (priest) 7. कायस्थादीनां पदतिविशेषः (a particular title to Kayastha &c.) 8. Trio (a) दाता (giver) (b) बोधयिता (enlightener, explainer) (c) दीपयिता (Illuminator). 9. *vishnu* 10. महादेव (Great God).

This is what the Grammarians and the Lexicographers have to say Now we turn to Nirukta. YASKA the author of Nirukta is certainly a great authority on the Vedas, in spite of Max Muller trying to belittle him. Not only was YASKA much nearer to the period in which the Vedas were more read and better understood, which fact by itself ought to give him greater weight, but we would find that his conclusions are mostly correct and based on authority and sound arguments.

Had the Vedic students only followed in his foot-prints they would not have found many hymns "obscure." or found themselves driven to the painful necessity of admitting their weaknesses in so many terms. So let us see what Yaska has to say on the word.

YASKA IN NIRUKTA

In Adhyaya VII Khanda 15 says the Author :

देवो दानाद्वा दीपनाद्वा द्युस्थानो भवतीति वा

which rendered into english will stand thus :—

Deva (is called so) by giving, by illuminating by enlightening (explaining), and by being in द्यु place.

The late Prof : Gurudatta puts it thus :—"that whatsoever or whosoever is capable of conferring some advantage upon us, capable of illuminating things, or capable of explaining them to us, and lastly the Light of all lights, these are the fit objects to be called *devatas*"

So, in short, we can very well say that whatsoever or whosoever possesses useful and brilliant qualities may be termed *deva* or *devatā*.

It may not be out of place to quote what Prof : Max Muller himself had to admit :—" *Deva* meant originally bright and nothing else ;

meaning bright it was constantly used of the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the day, the spring, the rivers, the earth ; and when a poet wished to speak of all these by one and the same word by what we should call a general term he called them all *devas*. When that had been done *Deva* did no longer mean "the Bright ones", but the name comprehending all the qualities which the sky and the sun and the dawn shared in common, excluding only those that were peculiar to each".

Do not these lines substantially support what we have said above ?

But then there are the *Devalas* of the mantras or hymns ? who or what are they ? *Devala* of a mantra is a keynote that helps us in explaining the mantra and enlightens us on the subject, and therefore says Yaska :—

अथातो दैवत्वं तद्यानि नामानि प्राधान्यस्तुतिना देवतानां तद्देवतमित्याचक्षते । सैषा देवतोपपरोक्षा । यत्काम ऋषिर्व्यासां देवतायामर्थपत्यमिच्छन्तस्तुतिं प्रयुङ्क्ते तद्देवतः समन्वी भवति ॥ निरुक्त ७।१

The late Prof : Gurudutta renders the above into English thus :—

"*Daivata* is a general term applied to those substances whose attributes are explained in a mantra'. The sense of the above is that when

it is known which substance it is that forms the subject of exposition in the mantra, the term signifying that substance is called the *devata* of that mantra".

Daivata is that (substance) whose attributes are described, that is, whatever names in any particular mantra denote any meaning, that is the *devata* of that mantra (Rig Veda Bhashya Bhoomika page 61).

INTERPRETATION OF THE TERM DEVA

Keeping in view the etymological meaning let us now consider how the term *deva* or *devata* can be fairly interpreted or translated when it occurs in the Vedic mantras. We have not to go far to find it being used in the Vedas. We just open the first page of the Rig Veda, read the very first line of the first mantra in the first Sookta,

अग्निमीडे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देव मृत्विज ।

होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥

and we find the term *devam*, (देवम्)

Before trying to find the meaning of the term we should know what Rig Veda is. Rig is derived from ऋच्-सुतौ (to praise, to describe the qualities etc.). The work, therefore, which describes the qualities, actions, and nature of things is named Rig Veda. Along with this we must always bear in mind what has been said before, that we use all the terms in their etymological meanings.

Now in the above mantra *devam* is an adjective of *Agni*. By *agni* all European scholars, nay even some Indians who have attempted at a

translation of the Vedas, seem to understand "Fire". They could not see in the term anything beyond that.

We find *Agni* is the *devala* of the hymn, i. e., *Agni* is the subject matter discussed by this *Richa* (description). The author, be He the Creator Himself or a savage agriculturist (sitting by the side of Indus), considers *Agni* to be of utmost importance and gives it predominance to every thing else and so takes it up first. *Agni* deserves it too.

Agni, meaning fire that we daily see in our hearths, is certainly an absolutely necessary item in our lives and it may safely be asserted that our existence without fire would be an improbability, if not an impossibility. Then there is fire, meaning heat, in everything, be it latent or patent: and although the body of a man, when he dies, is described as cold, i. e., devoid of heat, it is not quite so. Nothing is absolutely cold, not even ice excepted. So *Agni* is all-pervading and seems to be the life of all beings. The agriculturist (?) may not have a running train or a working engine before him, but today we find *Agni* propelling motions in diverse ways and diverse places (Railway Engines, Airships,

Telegraphs etc.) and then can we find fault with the poor old savage agriculturist if he could just at the outset of his lyric songs find in *Agni* the etymology अग्नि गतो "to move", or अङ्गति ऊर्ध्वं गच्छति "moves forward", or अङ्गुगति पूजनयोः *gati* (knowing, moving and realising) and worshipping? But certainly he would be a wonderful savage singer to be possessed of such wonderful foresight!

The adjectives show very clearly that not only the hearth-fire was meant, but ज्योतिषौ अग्नि heat electricity was also intended (vide NIRUKTA VII. 16). With this meaning the bard could very well say that *Agni* could procure all enjoyable things, all wealth and happiness. If with all these attributes which scientific researches have revealed the savage styled *Agni* as a *deva* (दानात् from giving) how was he to blame? Nor did the mental vision of the savage stop here! He could see farther still and realise that there was a higher *Agni*, a greater lavisher of wealth than the perceptible heat or material fire, a greater benefactor, a better *Purohita* (priest), a better *Ritwija*, one Lord of all the Universal *Yajna* यज्ञ (derived from यज्=देवपूजा सकृत्तिकारण दानेऽ worship, bringing together, and gift), this great universe wherein *Yajna* is constantly performed namely,

the evolution and the involution, the rain-fall and the absorption of water by heat or rays of the sun, the distribution of sweet scent and its dissolution, the birth and death. Yes, the Lord of this Universal *Yajna*, the great fountain of all wealth, all enjoyments and all bliss ; and just consider, if all adjectives mentioned in the *mantra* apply with equal force to the All-merciful Father, the God, and if even in that sense the author called *Agni* a *deva* he was thoroughly consistent with the root meaning (दानात्) from giving, for everything belongs to God and He alone is the bestower of all blessings. We therefore find in the SHATAPATHA ब्रह्मक्षयिः Agni is Brahma. (1. 4. 2. 11) Again, अग्निर्देवानां व्रतपतिः । एतद्ब्रह्म देवा व्रतं चरन्ति यत्सत्यम् ॥ (1. 1. 1. 2-5),, *Agni* is the Lord of all observances &c. In unmistakable language says the Rig Veda itself :—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निं मातृरथो दिव्यस्य सुपर्णो गुरुत्मान् ।

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

ऋ० १, १३४, ४६

Dr. Bharadwaja renders it into English thus :—

“He is one, but the wise call him by different names ; such as, *Indra*, *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Divya*—one who pervades all the luminous bodies, the source of light ; *Subarna* the protector and

preserver of the universe, whose works are perfect ; *Matarishwan*—powerful like wind ; *Gurutmán* – mighty by nature” (Rig. I. 164 116).

Even Griffith puts it thus :—

“They call him *Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni* and he is heavenly, nobly-winged *Garutman*.
To what is one. sages give many a title ; they call it *Agni, Yama, Matarishwan*”

The same thing we find in Yajur Veda 32. 1

तदेवाग्निस्तदादित्यस्तद्वायुस्तदु चन्द्रमा ।

तदेव शुक्रं तदब्रह्म ता अपः स प्रजापतिः ॥

“That is *Agni*, that is *Aditya*, that is *Vayu*, that *Chandrama*. That is *Shukra*, that is *Brahma*, that *Ap* and He *Prajapati*.”

To cut a long story short, fire is *Agni* as also God is *Agni*. Both are *devas* having common attributes, though in different degrees. If people are not surprised to find the adjective “round” given both to a tiny little ball and the big earth, there seems to be no reason why they should be surprised to find both God and Fire styled as *deva* (देव)—if only right interpretation is given to the word *deva*. The “difficulty”, the “solecism” and all such other things will disappear if only the term *deva* is not translated into “God” invariably. See what Prof : Max Muller himself says :—“But

if we always translated *Deva* in the Vedic hymns by God, we should not be translating, but completely transforming the thoughts of the Vedic poets". "(India : what can it teach us" page 218).

If no term equally expressive is found in the English language, why not let it remain *Deva* ? *Agni*, *Vayu*, and many other words have been allowed to stand in original, and so may *deva*.

Agni has other interpretations according to its root meaning, and to all meanings *deva* will apply with equal force ; a fuller discussion may, if it pleases the Almighty *Agni* (Lord), appear in a separate pamphlet. For the present let us confine ourselves to the word *deva*.

The word *deva* next appears in the second *mantra* in plural *devan* (देवान्). Griffith and his followers translate the *mantra* thus :—

"Worthy is *Agni* to be praised by living, as by
ancient seers ;

He shall bring hitherward the Gods"

(1. 1. 2.)

Now take *Agni* to mean either the Lord God or heat and the passage will convey the sense either that God will bring the *devas* or that heat will bring the *devas*. But what or who are the *devas* ? It is to be noted here that no equivalent

of the word "other" is put before deva as *Agni* himself has been styled as a *deva* in the preceding mantra. So if the *devas* here used were intended to be of the class of *Agni deva* there would have been some such word as "other" put before "*devas*" to differentiate it. But there is no such word, so Gods will not be a proper rendering. Then what does it indicate ? If it is remembered that by the term *Yajna* (यज्ञ) in the previous *mantra* the evolution of the universe is meant it will at once be understood how and why ऋतून् (*ritoon*, seasons) will be a proper and true rendering of *devan* (देवान्). We have SHATAPATHA again for our authority :—ऋतवी वै देवाः ॥ शत० ७।२।२६। We might with equal consistency interpret *devan* to mean दिव्यगुणान् दिव्यान भोग्यान् (brilliant and useful qualities and enjoyables). All these are brought about by God or with the help of heat and fire.

Again in the 4th *mantra* we find *Deveshu* (देवेषु)

अग्ने यं यज्ञमध्वरं विश्वतः परिभूरसि ।

स इद्देवेषु गच्छति ॥ ऋ०, १, १, ४

"*Agni*, the perfect sacrifice which thou encompassed about, Verily goeth to the Gods"

But in the light of the above explanation we would translate the *mantra* thus :—

Agni ! Pervading everything, thou preservest the *Yajna* where no *himsa* (hurting used broadly) is made and which goes to (benefit) the *devas*.

Griffith, like so may others of his class, has fallen into an error by almost always translating *Yajna* (यज्ञ) into "sacrifice." This is absurd. The English word sacrifice is generally used by the Western translators to convey the idea of killing or destroying something, but in this very *mantra* *Yajna* is qualified by *Adhwaram* (अध्वरं) which means अ=न, ध्व=हिंसा, that is, हिंसा दोषरहित, where no killing or destroying is done, where there is no *himsa* (हिंसा) (hurting used broadly). However, to come to our subject. That the "*Yajna* goes to the *deva*" is the substance of the *mantra*, that is accepted by Griffith as well. If by *Yajna* is meant ordinary *havan* (हवन) the meaning will be perfectly consistent, even if *devas* are taken to mean the elements, *Vayu*, &c., all of which possess useful and brilliant qualities. If *devas* mean "learned" विद्वां सो हि देवाः (those who are learned are *devas*), then they too benefit by the *havan*, and

who can deny that if by *Yajna* this mechanism of the universe is meant, it brings to us all that we require for our existence, enjoyment and bliss ? Who can deny that this working brings round the seasons ? So *devas* can be interpreted into so many ways with perfect consistency.

We next find the term *deva* in the 5th *mantra*—

अग्निर्हीता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चिद्व श्रवस्तमः । देवी देवेभिरागमत् ॥

Griffith translates it thus :—

"May *Agni*, sapient minded Priest, truthful, most gloriously great,

The God, come hither with the Gods."

Devebhih (देवेभिः) is plural and means along with, or through, or by means of the *devas*. We have already pointed out that the term means learned, brilliant qualities, seasons etc. *Agamat* (आगमत्) means attained. So the meaning will be that God or fire may be attained or obtained through brilliant qualities or the learned, or it comes along with seasons, or it operates in bringing useful attributes. No one can say that in the *mantra Agni deva*, the Almighty Father is addressed and invoked and requested to come with "fires" !

In this connection I wish to quote one instance more, as it is very amusing. In the 6th *mantra*

of the 6th *Sookta* we find *Devayantah* (देवयन्तः). The *mantra* reads thus :—

देव यन्तो यथा मतिमच्छा विदद्भुंगिरः महामनुपत शुतम् ।

Griffith translates it thus :—

“Worshipping even as they list, the singers laud him
who findeth wealth,
The far-renowned, the mighty one.”

GRIFFITH translates *Devayantah* into “worshipping.”

R. C. DUTTA renders it into “देवता कामना करिया” (wishing for *devata*).

M. N. DUTTA puts it in English thus :—“desirous of seeking the celestials.”

SAYANA understands by it “देवयन्तो मरुत संज्ञकान् देवानिच्छन्तां देवयन्तः देवानात्म इच्छन्तः ॥

DAYANANDARSHI connotes it as प्रकाशयन् आत्मनो देवमिच्छन्तो मनुष्याः । i. e. men desirous of acquiring the brilliant qualities.

Comparison would show that Griffith's translation is peculiar. Why was not the word *deva* translated here into God ? Wherefrom the word “worshipping” comes in the translation ? Does it not show which way the wind is blowing ? We can see with what object the Vedas have been translated. It is really a pity that they are thus misinterpreted and those that accept them as

Divine Knowledge are fast asleep and allow such misinterpretations to go unchallenged !

Just see ; *Devayantah* is an adjective qualifying *Girah* ; *girah* means learned men ; even SAYAN says :—गिरः स्रोतार ऋत्विजो गृह्णन्ति सुवन्ति इति गिरः ।

The meaning is clear. What sort of गिरः दैवयन्तः that is, desirous of acquiring the brilliant qualities.

This ought to be enough to show that if we would understand by the term *deva* that which its root meanings connote, many hymns that to our Western Commentators seem obscure and meaningless, nay indecent, will appear to be pregnant with good sense. But if one is determined to find only nonsense in the Vedas no one else can help it.

SOME MEANINGS ILLUSTRATED.

Having discussed in the foregoing portion the different root meanings of the term *deva* and how it can be translated, we next propose to show in what different meanings the term *deva* has been used in the Vedas giving our authorities for the same. It is really regrettable that the Vedas are not properly studied. The deeper we dive into them the more valuable gems do we find in them. We might without fear of contradiction say that if Vedic treasures are thoroughly searched there would be nothing unfound and nothing unlearned. KAPILA and KANADA, PATANJALI and VAYASA, GAUTAMA and JAIMINI saw in the Vedas the Divine knowledge intended for the weal of the whole of mankind. Yes, "full many a gem of purest ray serene" this deep ocean of the Vedas bears. It is our own fault if we sit on the shore of this deep ocean and return home empty-handed.

To return to our subject. We will now show where in the Vedas the word *deva* is used in its different meanings.

(1) The Almighty Father is *deva* or *devata* as He is the fountain-head of all brilliant attributes and the bestower of all bliss.

Says SAWMI DAYANANDA in his Satyarthha Prakasha (The Light of Truth) :—

“ *Deva* (from the root *diva*, which means to operate, desire to win, work, illuminate, praise, please, punish, sleep, desire and know) is one who operates in the universe and governs it and does all His works by His own powers without any help from others ; who desires and helps the good and the righteous to win and is Himself invincible, gives all power and means to work, who knows everything and is just and glorious ; illuminates and enlightens all ; is worthy of praise ; All-bliss-full, bestows happiness on others, punishes the wicked and gladdens the heart of the good, and himself enjoys perpetual bliss, who has ordained night for all to sleep and rest, and is the cause of dissolution, when He causes souls to rest in the indefinable, imperceptible primeval elementary matter the *prakriti* ; whose will is holy and who is desired and sought after by the good, and who pervades all and knows all”. (Translated by Dr. Chiranjiva Bharadwaja).

विश्वतश्चरुत विश्वतोमुखो विश्वतो वाङ्मृत विश्वतस्पात् ।

सं वाङ्मयां घमति सं पतद्वद्व्यावामुमी जनयन्देव एकः ॥ ऋ० १०, ८१, ३ ।

Herein *deva* is clearly used for God, and is qualified by *Ekah* (एक = one) to remove all possible

doubts. Even Griffith translates the verse as follows :—

"He who hath eyes on all sides round about him, a mouth
on all sides, arms and feet on all sides.
He, the Sole God producing earth and heaven, wieldeth
them, with his arms as wings together".

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्निश्चानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।

युयोध्यस्मद्भुङ्कराण मेनो भूयिष्ठानि नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥ ऋ० १, १८६, १ ।

Griffith translates :—

"By goodly path lead us to riches, *Agni*, thou god who
knowest all our works and wisdom,
Remove the sin that makes us stray and wander ; most
ample adoration will we bring thee".

See also Rig Veda I. 24. 1 and 2 quoted *infra*.

(2) *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (wind) etc. are called *devas* as each of them has useful attributes.

अग्निर्देवता वातो देवता सूर्यो देवता चन्द्रमा देवता वसवो देवता
रुद्रादेवतारित्यादेवता मरुतो देवता विश्वे देवा देवता ब्रह्मस्यतिर्देवतेन्द्रो
देवता वरुणो देवता । य० १४, २० ।

The deity *Agni*, the deity *Vala*, the deity *Suryya*, the deity *Chandra*, the deity *Vasus*, the deity *Rudras*, the deity *Adityas*, the deity *Marutas*, the deity *Vishwadevas*, the deity *Vrihaspati*, the deity *Indra*, the deity *Varuna*.

(3) The learned are called *devas* from *danat* (दानात्-giving) as well as from *dyotanat* (द्योतनात्-explaining, enlightening).

Even in the present age Brahmans are called *Bhoodevah* (भूदेवाः).

धृतरता आदित्या इषिरा आरि मत्कर्त रश् सूरिवागः ।

शृणुतो वो वरुण मित्र देवा भद्रस्य विद्वां अवसे ऊवे वः ॥ ऋ० २, २९, १ ।

इयेदेवा युयमिदापयः स्थ ते सृजत नाघमानाय मत्तम् ।

मा वो रथो मध्यमवाहृते भृन्मायुष्मा वत्स्वापिषु शमिष्य ॥४

"Upholders of the Law, ye strong *Adityas*,
remove my sin like he who hears in secret.
Ye *Varuna Mitra* and all Gods who listen,
I call to help me, I who know your goodness.
Ye, O ye Gods, are verily our kinsmen ;
as such be kind to me who now implore you.
Let not your car come slowly to our worship :
of kinsmen such as you ne'er let us weary".

Griffith.

Note that in the above *devah* is translated by Gods.

In the first mantra "*Devas*" is qualified by "धृतरता आदित्या इषिरा" ॥ Dr. Griffith thinks that in the first line *Adityas* are addressed, so he does not take it to be an adjective. If he had translated *Adityas* into "brilliant" and *Ishira* into "wise" he would have encountered with no difficulty.

In the fourth *mantra* though Griffith translates *devas* into Gods, it is perfectly clear from his own translation that the Gods are said to be our kinsmen, showing that the prayer is made to men, and certainly learned men, the *Devas*. The translation, however, is not very happy.

Besides other mistranslations one mistake is clear and palpable. Griffith translates युष्मावसु अग्निषु अमिष्य by "never let us weary," while it really means, 'we may work hard to acquire knowledge like you'.

इमन्देवा असपत्नं सुवर्धं महतश्चक्राय महते ज्यैष्ठ्याय महते जान
राज्यायेन्द्रस्येन्द्रियाय * * * । य० ८, ४० ।

"O ye *devas* (learned men) ! Proclaim that man with one voice your king &c. &c."

यां मेधां देवगणाः पितरथो पासते ।

तया नामद्य मेघयाग्ने मेधाविनं कुरु स्वाहा । य० ३२, १४ ।

"That wisdom which the companies of Gods, and
Fathers, recognise,
Even with that intelligence, O *Agni*, make us wise today
All hail !"
Griffith.

Note—Here *Devaganah* is translated by "companies of Gods". It would have been better understood had the original been allowed to stand. Clearly, "the learned" would be more appropriate rendering.

Says NIRUKTAKARA VII. 4 :—

अस्ति ह्युच्चारो बहुल्यम् लोके देव देवत्वमतिथि देव ।

"We often find in common practice of the world at large, that learned men, parents, and *atithis*, (or those guest missionaries, who have no fixed residence, but wander about from place to place benefiting the world by their religious instructions) are regarded as *devatas* or called by the name of *devatas*.

In SHATAPATHA we find :—

विद्वांसो हि देवाः ।

that is, the learned are the *devas*.

(4) *Devas* indicate seasons.

We need quote no authority for this. as it has already been shown where *Devas* are used for the seasons. (Vide *Supra* p. 20.)

(5) The organs of senses are called *devas*.

अनेज देकं मनसो जवीथो नैनद्देवा आपुवन् पूर्वं सर्वत् ।

तद्भावतोऽन्यन्तेति तिष्ठत्तत्किन्नपोमातरिष्या दधाति ॥ य० ४०, ४ ।

"Motionless, one, swifter than mind,—the *devas* failed to overtake it speeding on before them. It standing still, outstrips the others running. Herein doth *Natarisvan* establish Action."

So after all the term *devas* in the above *mantra* could not be translated into Gods, and in the footnote Griffith had to write :—

“The *Devas* here meaning organs of sense, sight, etc.” Why, Sir, how the term *devas* means “organs of sense” ? Do the organs shine ? Are they brilliant ? Why not render it into Gods ?

The authors of the UPANISHADS understood it well :—

न चक्षुसा गृह्यते नाग्निवाचा नान्येन्द्रैः ॥ मुण्डक० ३, १, ८ ।

“He is apprehended neither by the eye, nor by speech, *nor by the other senses &c.*”

Can it be denied that *devas* mean organs of sense, because they are endowed with useful qualities !

(6) *Deva* means king.

नापाभूत न वोऽतौष्टषामानिः शक्ता ऋभवी यज्ञे अग्निम् ।

समिन्द्रेण मदथ सं मरुद्भिः सं राजभौ रदधेयाय देवाः ॥ ऋ० ४, २४, ११ ।

“Ye were not far : we have not left you thirsting ; blameless in this our sacrifice, *O Rikhus*. Rejoice you with the *Maruts* and with *Indra* with the *Kings*, Gods ! that ye may give us riches,”

Griffith

(7) *Deva* means *Ritwik* (priests) as in Rig 9. 96. 6.

ब्रह्मा देवानां पदवीः कवीनामृषिर्विप्राणां महिषी सृगाणाम् ।

SAYANA when commenting on this *mantra* says :—

देवानां स्तोत्र कारिणामृत्विजां ब्रह्माख्यत्विक् स्थानीये भवति ।

This is from *Dyotana* (explaining things).

Even Mr. Griffith had to admit in his notes that in certain mantras *devas* mean priests, *e.g.* in Rig III. 7. 7 When writing his note on "The willing Bulls" (as translated by him) he says :— "The zealous priests who in this stanza are boldly called Gods".

Again, in VII. 1. 22. he translates "देवेभ्यश्चमिषु" into "which Gods have kindled : " and in the note explains his translations by adding "lighted by the ministering priests." Again, when translating the 20th mantra of book IX hymn 62, he translates the word *deva* into Gods but in the footnote puts Gods, *devah* : the priests.

Once again, Mr. Griffith in X. 122. 7 translates the word *deva* into Gods, but in the foot-note says :—"Gods : here meaning priests."

Can there be any better and clearer admission of the fact that the word *deva* means also a priest ? But may we ask why in the translation the word *devah* was not translated into priests or Ritwik ?

(8) The Sun and the Moon are *devas* as they

have brilliancy and useful attributes in them ; who can deny that without the light of the sun, or without the nourishing attributes of the rays of the moon many advantages that humanity or the vegetable world derives will be lost ? This is from *Danat* (giving). Besides, they illumine the world, *deepant* (illuminating).

आकृष्येन रजसा वर्त्तमानो निवेशयन्नमृतं मर्त्ये च ।

हिरण्यधेन सविता रथेना देवीयाति सुवनानि पश्यन् ॥ ऋ० १, ३५, २ ।

“The glorious, resplendent sun, (*Deva Savitar*) who gives life and energy to all the world—animate and inanimate—through rain and solar rays, and makes all physical objects visible, attracts all other planets and rotates in his own orbit but does not move round other planets” *Dr. Bharadwaja.*

This *mantra* appears in Yajur Veda also *Adhyaya 33 mantra 43.*

Griffith, when translating this *mantra*, keeps the word *Savitar* in tact, but translates *deva* into God. In his footnote he says *Savitar* is sun. If he could see that *deva*, when put before *Savitar* (Sun) as adjective, can only mean glorious, illuminating according to the root meaning, he would not have translated it into God.

Again.

देवस्य सवितुः सवे कर्म कृण्वन्तु मानुषाः ।

शं नो भवन्त्वपः ओषधीः शिवाः । अथ० ६, २३, ३ ।

"Let all the people celebrate the rite of *Savitar* the God,
Sweet unto us he waters, Plants propitious".

Griffith.

Here again *Savitar* (Sun) is called *Deva*. Men are to celebrate the rite of the sun and the result is given in the other half of the *mantra* ; that is, the waters will be sweet and plants propitious ! We cannot help noticing here that Mr. Griffith has kindly translated *apah* into "waters" and *shivah* into propitious. He might have, as he has done in many places, put अपः as *apa* and शिवाः as *Sivas* and called them some "Gods".

Still clearer we find in

सप्तत्वा हरितो रथे वहति देव सूर्य ।

शोचिष्कोशं विचक्षण । ऋ० १, ५०, ८ ।

"Seven Bay steeds harnessed to thy car bear thee O thou
far-seeing one.

God, *Surya*, with the radiant hair".

Griffith.

Note—"deva *Surya*" is translated by "God *Surya*".

(9) *Devas* are our parents, and spiritual guides,
as also our guests.

देवाः पितरः पितरो देवाः । यो अस्मि सो अस्मि । अथ० ६, १२३, ३ ।

"Gods are the Fathers and the Fathers Gods.
I am the very man I am".

Griffith.

It requires no exposition, so plain it is.

In an UPANISHAD we find :—

मातृदेवो भव, पितृदेवो भव, आचार्यदेवो भव, अतिथिदेवो भव ॥

तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद्० व० १ । ११

which means :—

Be my mother a *devata*. Be my father a *devata*. Be my teacher a *deva*, and be my guest a *deva*.

(10) *Deva* means cloud.

यद् वो देवा उपजीका आसिञ्चन् धन्वन्तृदक्षम् ।

तेन देव प्रसूतेनन्दं दूषयता विषम् ॥ अथ० ६, १००, २ ।

"That water, *Ujjivukas* which *Gods* poured for you on
thirsty land,

With that same water sent by Gods, drive ye away this
poison here".

Griffith.

Though Mr. Griffith chooses to translate *deva* into Gods, yet to any reader it will be plain that *deva* here means "clouds," pouring down water.

Our meaning gets confirmation from

क्षेत्रे सुकृष्टे ह्युपिते च बीजे देवे च वर्षलृत्तुकाल युक्तम् ।

न स्यात् फलं तस्य कृतः प्रसिद्धिः अन्यत्र देवादिति चिन्तयामि ॥

महाभारत ३, २३५, २३ ।

that is, "even when land is properly cultivated, seeds sown and *deva* (cloud) seasonably pours down rain, still we often hear that crops may not grow. How could it be true, as I think, unless everything in this world is governed by destiny."

The above, we think, is enough to demonstrate the proposition that the word "*deva*" has many different meanings and it will not be correct to translate it invariably into Gods which will thus be misleading.

DEVAS :

THEIR NUMBER AND CONSORTS.

Some commentators have been dazzled, not so much by the brilliancy of the *devas* as by their number which they find in some of the *mantras* of Rig Veda, and this, they say, supports their theory of polytheism and kethenotheism in the Vedas. They further get strength from certain terms occuring in the Vedas which they presume to be the names of the consorts of some of the *devas*. Let us examine this.

The number of the *devas* that they first come across is "thrice eleven". They refer us to Rig Veda 1. 139. 11 which reads thus :—

ये देवासो दिव्यैकादश स्य पृथिव्यामध्येकादश स्य ।

अप्सु क्षितौ महिनैकादश स्य ते देवासो यज्ञमिसं जुषध्वम् ॥

"O ye eleven Gods whose home is in heaven, O ye eleven who make earth your dwelling,

Ye, who with might, eleven, live in waters, accept this sacrifice, O Gods, with pleasure".

Griffith.

There is, however, nothing to be astonished at, if only we keep in mind what *devas* mean. The point will become clearer still from what follows, and for this we would refer our readers

to an anterior *mantra* of the book in which 33 *devas* are mentioned. The *mantra* reads thus:—

आ नासत्या विभिरैकादशैरिह देवेभिर्यातं मधुपेयमश्विना ।

प्रायुस्तारिष्टं नौरपांसि मृचतं सेधतं द्वेषोभवतं सचाभुवा ॥ ऋ० १, ३४, ११ ।

We would generally take Griffith's rendering for discussion. He translates the above verse thus :—

"Come, O *Nasatyas*, with the thrice-eleven Gods, come
O ye, *Aswins*, to the drinking of the meath,
Make long our days of life and wipe out our sins :
ward off our enemies ; be with us ever more."

As elsewhere so here the difficulty is self-created. The words *Nasatyas* and *Aswins*, we believe, confounded the translator. But we really do not know why these gentlemen are so anxious to find proper names in the Vedas. The word *Nāsatyas* is very simple. The later commentators had certainly before them some earlier commentaries. Mr. Griffith must have perused them. Now let us take one of those old commentaries and see what it says.

SAYANA while commenting on this *mantra* says :—असत्यानाद्यतेनरहितं (free from untruth). But he is clearer still in his notes on a preceding *mantra*,

the 7th *mantra* of this very Sookta, wherein he writes :—

सत्यं साधसत्यौ । न मत्यावसत्यौ । न असत्यो नासत्यौ ।

and in support of his view quotes YASKA :—

सत्योव वनासत्या वित्यौर्णवामः । निरुक्त ६, १३ ।

who has further to say :—

सत्यस्य प्रणीतारा वित्याद्यायणः (*ibid.*)

In the face of all these how could not any one see that the word means “truthful and pure,” we wonder ! Even Mr. Wilson in his Sanskrit English Dictionary derives the word from न not and असत्य impure, although it means, according to him, the two sons of *Aswin*.

This much about the word *Nasatyas*. Now let us see what the word *Aswins* means. It is derived from अश्व व्याप्नोति (pervading) and is used in dual. Some interpret it into “heaven and earth”, some “day and night,” some “sun and moon” and so on. (Vide NIRUKTA XII. 1). Again some interpret it into :—

अश्विनौ चापि भर्तागैर्जभरौ भर्तारविर्त्यर्धस्तुर्फरीतु इन्नारौ । निरुक्त० १३, ५

The substance of the above passage from NIRUKTA is that जभरौ and तुर्फरीतु are two names of *Ashwi*. जभरौ (*Jarbharee*) means भर्तारौ (*Bhartarau*)

that is, protector or holder, which means those men or substances that have the power to protect or hold ; and तुरफरीतु (*Turpharitu*) means हन्तारौ (*Hantarau*) that is, destroyer or dissector, which means those men or substances that have the power to dissolve another, or mix or unmix gas, heat, electricity etc.

In the text before us the word *Aswin* being qualified by *Nasatyas* (truthful and pure) it cannot be denied that it denotes some living beings, or, substances that can be mixed or unmixed etc. Neither 'heaven and earth', nor 'day and night', nor 'sun and moon' etc. are living beings nor such substances. So it is plain that none of these was referred to in the text. The last meaning given above, however, fits in quite easy. Therefore, here the term *Aswin* must be taken to mean those men or substances that have the power to protect or hold, or to dissolve or dissect etc.

Having the above in view, the verse would mean :—

"Ye truthful and pure *Aswins* (experts in making gas etc.), come here with the 33 *devas* to drink *Madhu* (something sweet), wipe out our sins, ward off our enemies, apply yourselves with true energy and prolong our lives .

But who are these 33 *Devas* ? Let the Vedas answer. Rig Veda, 1st Mandal, 45th Sookta says :—

त्वमग्नेवसूँरिह रुद्रां आदित्यां चत । यजा स्वध्वरं जनं मनुजातं
वृत्त प्रुषम् । ऋ० १, ४५, १ ।

In his translation of this Griffith puts worship for *yaja* (यज) but we know *yaj* (यज्) means देवपूजा सङ्गतिकरण दानेषु (worship, combine and give). The word in this *mantra* certainly does not mean to worship, it means to combine, or collect, or bring together; for, it would be absurd if in the *mantra* *Agni* were requested to worship *Vasus* etc. Taking, therefore, the word *yaj* to mean to combine or collect or bring together the *mantra* in English would stand thus :—

“O *Agni* (learned) ! *iha* (in this world) *yaja* (bring together) *Vasus*, *Rudras*, *Adityas* and *Ghrithprusham* and *Manujatam Swadhwaram janam* (to men)”.

Now, what and how many are these *Vasus*, *Rudras*, *Adityas* etc. ? It is well known to Sanskrit scholars, and even Western translators admit it, that *Vasus* are eight [and “were at first personifications of natural phenomena,” (Griffith Rig Veda page 40 note). Why not now ?

or at least in this *mantra* ?] *Rudras* are eleven and *Adityas* twelve in number.

Says AITAREYA BRAHMANA :—

वयस्त्रिंशद्देवाः सोमपास्त्रयस्त्रिंशद् सोमपा अष्टौ वसव एकादश रुद्रा
द्वादश आदित्याः प्रजापतिय व षट् कारयन्ते देवाः सोमपाः १२, २, ८, (१८)

There are 33 *devas* who are *somapas* and 33 who are *asomapas*. The *Somapas* are 8 *Vasus*, 11 *Rudras* and 12 *Adityas*, 1 *Prajapati* and 1 *Vashatkara*.

I. The eight *Vasus* are :—(1) the heated cosmic bodies (2) the planets (3) the atmosphere, (4) the superterrestrial spaces, (5) the suns, (6) the rays of etherial space, (7) the satellites, and (8) the stars.

These are called *Vasus* because these eight are the abode of all those that “live, move, and have their being”. (यद्विवसन्ते सर्वम्)

II The eleven *Rudras* are the ten *pranas* (nervauric forces) enlivening the human frame and the 11th is the human spirit. These are called *Rudras* because when they desert the body it becomes dead and the relatives of the deceased, naturally, begin to weep (from *rud* to weep).

III. The twelve *Adityas* are the 12 solar

months as they cause the lapse of the term of existence of each object or being.

IV. *Ghrilaprusham* means sprinkler of water. SAYANA interprets it उदकस्य सैत्तारम्. It may be fairly translated into Indra, or Sun, electricity or great heat or force. *Manujatam*, as interpreted by SAYANA, would mean प्रजापतिनोत्पादितम् (created by God).

V. *Swadhwaram* from *su* + *Adhwaram*, means useful *yajna*, that is, *Prajapati* because by *yajna* mankind is benefited through purification of air and water, and growth of vegetables etc.

So adding 8 *Vasus*, 11 *Rudras*, and 12 *Adityas* and 1 *Indra* and 1 *Parjapati* we get the number 33.

Let us see what the next *mantra* of the same Sookta says. It reads thus :—

तुष्टीवानोहि दागुषे देवा अग्ने दिचेतसः ।

तान्नोहिदद्य गिर्वणस्त्रयस्त्रिंशत्तमा वह ॥ ऋ० १, ४५, २ ।

“O *Agni*, (learned)! who are endowed with swiftness etc. and are honoured by speeches bring you those thirty three, certainly, for learned, who are mindful of, and seekers after truth, and who bestow happiness on the giver.”

Now reading the two *mantra* together, does it leave any doubt that the 33 *devas* are as described above ?

Read one more *mantra* of Rig Veda.

आदित्यानां वसूनां रुद्रियाणां देवी देवानां न मिनामि धाम ।

तेमा भद्राय शवने ततश्चुर पराजित सक्तृ त सषावहम् ॥१०॥ ४८ ॥ ११ ।

"I, as a God, ne'er violate the statutes of Gods, of *Vasus*,
Rudriyas, *Adityas*.
These Gods, have formed me for auspicious vigour, uncon-
quered and invincible for ever."

Griffith

We would like to put the verse into English thus :

Devo (देवो) God *devanam* (देवानां) of the *devas*, *Adityas*, *Vasus* and *Rudras minami* (मिनामि) I destroy *na* (न) not *dhama* (धाम) locality *te* (ते) they *bhadraya* (भद्राय) for their good adore *shavase* (शवसे) or revere *ma* (मा) me, ever unconquered and invincible.

Our this enumeration is supported by the UPANISHAD. In answer to a question put by VIDAGDHA SAKALYA as to who those 33 are, YAJNAVALKYA says :—"The eight *Vasus*, the eleven *Rudras*, the twelve *Adityas*, they make thirty one, and *Indra* and *Parjapati* make thirty three" (Bri ; III. 9. 2). In the lines that follow there, we find the *Vasus* etc. named. SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA XIV. 16. also bears us out.

A writer says :—"In time the number very much increased and in verse 9 of the 9th hymn of the 3rd Mandal the Gods have been spoken of as three hundred, three thousand, and thirty nine in number." He quotes the *mantra* :—

वीणिशता वीसहस्राण्यग्निं त्रिंशच्चदेवा नव चास पर्यन् । ३, ६, ९ ।

This puzzled the writer and in his anxiety or blinded by preconceptions, he thought that Vedas teach the worship of 3339 Gods. How strange ! Where is the word "worship" in the *mantra* ? We would discuss the word worship later on. For the present, let us confine ourselves to the number. The number would never have confounded the writer had he only remembered the meanings of the root *dwa*. It has already been shown what different meanings *devas* can have. So we may at once say that *devas* are "all that can form the subject of human knowledge." (PANDIT GURUDATTA) So why 3339, the *devas* are innumerable ! See SHATA-PATHA 14. 6. 11 विश्वेदेवा अनन्तमेव, "*Vishwadevas* are infinite." As to the meaning of the *mantra* in question and to the number of *devas* mentioned therein we would refer our readers to BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD once again, where when VIDAGDHA SAKALYA questioned RISHI YAJNA-

VALKYA, "How many *devas* are there?" YAJNAVALKYA replied, "three and three hundred three and three thousand." Further during the discourse SAKLYA asked "who are these three and three hundred, three and three thousand?" and YAJNAVALKYA answered "they are only the various powers of them (that is of the thirty three *devas*); in reality there are only thirty three *devas*." (III. 9. 1. and 2)

Even SAYANA when writing his commentary on the *mantra* in question refers to the authority in BRIHADARANYAKA.

But why the *devas* are so styled the Vedas themselves reply :—*वृचक्षसो अग्निमिशंतो अर्हणा ब्रह्मदेवासो अमृतत्वमानयुः ॥ ऋ० १०, ६३, ४ ।*

Looking on men, never slumbering, they by their deserts attained as Gods to lofty immortality.

Griffith.

Note :—Arhana—means by worship, by devotion.

Again :—

येन देवाः स्वराबहुर्हित्वा शरीरममृतस्य नाभिम् ।

तेन गेयं सुकृतस्य लोकां घर्मस्य व्रतेन तपसा यशस्यवः ।

" May we, fame-seekers, reach the world of virtue by
service of *Gharma* and through fervour,
Whereby the Gods went up to heaven, the centre of life
eternal, having left the body."

Griffith.

Note :—*Tapasa* is rendered into 'through fervour', and *deva* into 'Gods.'

It is useless to prolong the discourse. From what is said in the BRIHADARANYKA UPANISHAD and in SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA it is clear what the number 3339 indicates ; and what the thirty three *devas* are. The discourse clearly shows that from "three hundred three and three thousand three," the number was reduced to thirty three ; from thirty three, again to six (*Agni, Prithivi, Vayu, Antariksha, Aditya, Dyū*) ; from six again he reduced the number to three (the three *lokas*, worlds , from three to two (food and breath, from two to *Adhyardha* (the universal electricity, the sustainer of universe known as *Sutratama*) and from *Adhyardha* to ONE (एको देव इति स ब्रह्मत्वदित्याचक्षते) One God and He is the Brahma and they call him THAT

The procedure adopted is not novel. If one has to point out the moon hidden behind the branches of a tree, he says, look at the tree, then says, look at that branch, and then says, look

between those branches of the tree, and then points out the moon through those branches. So here.

Now let us look to the *Devapatnis*, the so called consorts of the *devas*.

If once the term *deva* is rightly understood there will be no difficulty in knowing what is meant by the *devapatnis*. Why, if the learned men (*devas*) have their consorts no one need grudge ! And, if we are not surprised to find in the vegetable kingdom *Pollen* and *Ovule* why should we be surprised if those that have sufficient power to understand find the male and female elements in the natural phenomena of the universe ? And how else could they be described ! Take for example the terms *Hotra*, *Bharati*, *Varutri*, *Dhishana*, mentioned in the 10th *mantra* of last *Mandal*, *Sookta* 22 of the *Rig Veda*. No, not only these but even *Indrani*, *Varunani*, *Agnayi* are named in the 12th *mantra* ; and this was enough for the neotranslators to establish that *Indra* has his wife *Indrani*, *Varuna* his *Varunani* and so on. But if we once understand that *Indra*, means sun, electricity or the wind, *Indrani* would mean the *Shakti* (power), of *Indra*. May we, by the by, enquire who is the husband

God of *Hotra* ? of *Dhishana* ? Mr. Griffith could very conveniently say that *Indrani*, *Varunani*, and *Agnayi* are respectively the consorts of *Indra*, *Varuna*, and *Agni* ; but he had to admit that *Bharati* is Holy speech ; *Varutri*, she who is chosen, the excellent ; and *Dhishana* is said to be a synonym of *Vani* or *Vagdevi*, the Goddess of speech." .. In giving his note on *Hotra* he says :—
 “*Hotra* is called the wife of *Agni* or the personified invocation.” May we ask if *Agni* had two wives, *Hotra* and *Agnayi*, or these two are the names of the same lady ! We have to read between the lines and put a reasonable construction to the *mantras*, forgetting for a moment that the hymns are the songs of the rustics. Read the 11th *mantra* of the same *Sookta* :—

अभिनो देवीरवसा सहः शशंषा वृषदाः ।

अच्छिन्नपचाः सचन्ताम् ॥ १, २२, ११

Griffith translates it thus :—

“Spouses of Heroes, Goddesses, with whole wings may they come to us with great protection and with aid.

“Spouses of Heroes, Goddesses.” Need we say that here the wives of the learned men, who are called *devis*, are invited ? Does it not sufficiently show “what is indicated by *devis* and *devapatnis*” ? If we study the *Sookta* properly we

will find that after describing the qualities of electricity, it teaches mechanism and invokes the elements and their powers (*Shaktis*), also the wives of the learned to help them in their arts ! The whole mistake arises from the meanings of the terms *deva* and *devi*, and the mistake is enhanced by a wrong interpretation of the word *Somapitaye* which is understood to mean to drink the *soma* but which in reality means for securing the source of bliss (स्रोतव्यस्य सुखस्य पीतये प्राप्तये). Our meaning gets further support from the word *somapatama* used in the 1st *mantra* of the 21st *Sookta* where it is used as an adjective of *Indraghni*. Even here Griffith translates *somapatama* into "chief *soma*-drinkers." The word really means the *protectors of the vegetable kingdom*. This however, will be beyond our present scope. So we take up our next head.

THE ONE DEVA OR MONOTHEISM.

The first question that arises after the preceding discourse is whether these thirty three, or for the matter of that three thousand three hundred thirty nine *devas* are to be worshipped ? Whether there are so many Gods (so many centres of a circle ?) or whether the *Vedas* teach the worship of One Supreme *Deva* ?

To some of the writers monotheism seems to be a later development in the Rig Veda ; but to us, looking through the glasses of the ancient sages, the Rishes, who made the Vedas a special study, who did not approach the Vedas with any preconceived notion, who did not see the Vedas with their material eyes, but looked at them with their psychological eyes, with their internal sight. To us there is in the Rig Veda no Polytheism, no Kethenotheism as some commentators see, though they do not quote a single authority from the Vedas themselves for their this opinion. Even here I challenge any one to point out a single *mantra* in all the four Vedas advocating the worship of more than one God. We clearly and uniformly, throughout the four Vedas, find monotheism, pure

and simple. Mr. A. C. Sen who holds the theory that "of the physical gods, the Heaven and the Earth appear to have been the oldest," finds himself in an awkward corner when he finds the very first *mantra* of the Rig Veda lauding *Agni*. In order to give credence to his theory he makes a unique statement and says that "the hymns of the Rig Veda have not been chronologically arranged," but for this statement he gives evidence, neither internal nor external. Until and unless Mr. A. C. Sen or his co-believers can unimpeachably establish their theory, certainly no one has the right to doubt the arrangement of the hymns as they are found, on mere surmises ! And that only to suit one's own notion and classification ! Rig Veda begins with describing *Agni* which, as we have shown by reference to etymological meanings, indicates the Great Almighty Father, as well as the ordinary fire and electricity ; and it has also been shown that all the adjectives given in the *mantra* suit either meaning of *Agni*.

We have already said that looking through the glasses of the ancient seers of the *mantras*, the Rishis, we nowhere find the worship of many Gods. We find only one centre of this universal circle.

कस्यनृनं कतमस्यामृतानां मनामहे चारुदेवस्यनाम ।

कोनोमेक्षा अदितये पुनर्दात्पितरं च दृश्यं मातरं च ॥ ऋ० १, २४, १

अग्नेर्वैयं प्रथमस्यामृतानां मनामहे चारुदेवस्यनाम ।

सनी मक्षा अदितये पुनर्दात्पितरं च दृश्यं मातरं च ॥ २

Asked in the first *mantra* (1. 24. 1) as to "who is the God whose sacred name among the immortals should we know, and who shows us again our father and mother on this mighty earth," the second *mantra* in answer says:—

"It is *Agni*, the first among the imperishables—(God, soul and matter), whose sacred name we should know. He shows us again our father and mother on this mighty earth."

We read in Rig Veda

तमोऽग्निं जगतस्तस्युपस्यति धियं जिन्वमवसे ह्रमहे वयम् ।

पूषानो यथा वेद साम सहधे रक्षिता पायुरदम् स्वस्तये । ऋ० १, ८६, ५
which even Griffith had to translate thus:—

"Him we invoke for aid who reigns supreme, the Lord of all that stands or moves, inspirer of the soul,
That *Pushan* may promote the increase of our wealth,
our keeper and our guard infallible for our good."

In the 164th *Sookta* read the very translation of Mr. Griffith; you will find the question, "what was that One who in the unborn's image hath established and fixed firm these world's six

regions?" (1-164-6); and after a short discourse the savage bard says:—

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्व जाते ।

तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्तन्नम्रयो अभिचाकशीति । ऋ० १, १६४, २०

"Two birds with fair wings, knit with bonds of friendship
in the same sheltering tree have found a refuge,
One of the twain eats the sweet Fig tree's fruitage; the
other eating not regardeth only."

What are these two birds and what is this tree? Note that one bird eats the fruit of the tree, and the other without eating is a mere looker on. Need we say in so many words that the one bird is the soul and the other the Almighty Father: their plumage are their good qualities and the tree is the Material Cause of the creation. The soul enjoys the fruit of his actions and God without being affected by consequences only witnesseth the whole situation. Read *mantras* 21 and 22 and this point will be clearer still. In 21st *mantra* we find "विश्वस्य भूवनस्य गोपाः" and Griffith translates it into "universe's mighty keeper." Can this Keeper be other than the Almighty Creator of the universe? SAYANA in his *Bhashya* distinctly says, it is *Parameshwara* "the great Lord"; but Griffith says it may be *Soma*; and Griffith is "an honourable man." When we go to *mantra* 39 and compare it with

Griffith's translation we cannot help laughing. We propose to put the whole thing before our readers :—

ऋचौ अक्षरे परमे व्योमन्यस्मिन्देवा अधि विद्ये निषेदुः ।

यस्तन्न वेद किञ्चन करिष्यति य इत्तद्दिदुस्त इमे समासते ॥ १८ ।

We first put Griffith's translation :—

"Upon what syllable of holy praise-song as 'twere
their highest heaven, the Gods repose them,
Who knows not this, what will he do with praisesong ?
But they who know it will sit here assembled.

In "The Wealth of India" by Mr. Manmath Nath Dutta the author translates the verse thus :—
"all the Gods have taken their seats upon this supreme heaven, the imperishable (text) of the Veda : what will he, who knows not this, do with the Veda : but they who do know it, they are perfect."

If these translations are correct, they would indicate that one who knows that the "Gods repose, or have taken seats on the syllable of holy praise-song, or on the heaven, will have perfect knowledge, and the praise-song (*Richa*) cannot help him who does not know this. But what do we really understand by this. Ah—deeper meanings, higher sense, loftier ideas, contained in the *mantra* were not searched for ! Yes, we too re-

peat किञ्चाकरिष्यति (what will the *Richas* do!) Yes, we too say that those who never study the *mantra* properly, the *mantra* cannot help them. Even SAYANA has given a different meaning to this *mantra*. NIRUKTA, of course, has given many renderings. See XIII-10. Space would not permit a discussion of them all so we shall be content with the following one rendering as it appears to us to be the best meaning and consistent with the foregoing *mantras*:

In Him who is the essence (*Sāra*) of Rik, who is imperishable and the mighty Pervader all the *devas* reside. What will the *Richas* do unto him who does not know Him. They who know Him reside in Him. (Sit near Him or reside near Him.)

In this very *Sookta* we find the *mantra* which even the Western Scholars have to admit to be monotheistic, namely, stanza 46th which we have already quoted. But is this the end of the Rig Veda where only the Western eyes could see monotheism? No. It is only at the end of the 1st *mandala*.

Here not a very unimportant question naturally arises. If not for worship what are these 33 *devas* for? We have already explained what these 33 *devas* are. To repeat but not in the same

terms we find another authority to support our view. Says Atharva Veda.

यस्य त्रयस्त्रिंशद्देवा अङ्गे गात्रा विभेजिरे ।

तान्वैतद्यस्त्रिंशद्देवा नैके ब्रह्मविदोविदुः ॥ १०, ७, २७

"The three and thirty Gods within his body were
disposed as limbs :
Some, deeply versed in Holy Lore, some know these
three and thirty Gods."

Griffith.

Who is this *his* in the phrase *within his body*?
Read *mantra* 24 preceding and you find the
answer there.

यत्र देवा ब्रह्मविदो ब्रह्मज्येष्ठ सुपासते ।

यो वेदान् विद्यात् प्रत्यक्षं स ब्रह्मवेदितास्मात् ॥ १०, ७, २४

"Where the Gods, versed in Sacred Lore, worship the
loftiest Power Divine.
The priest who knows them face to face may be a sage
who knows the truth."

Griffith.

In both the verses *Brahmaviduh* is translated into "versed in sacred lore ;" that is "knower of true theology." In the 24th *mantra* *Brahma* is translated into "Power Divine". Would not to an Indian, nay, to others too the meaning become clearer if the *mantras* were put into english thus :—"Where *Brahma* knowing *devas* worship

the Loftiest *Brahma* (Supreme God) etc. 24. The thirty three *devas* are as if they were His limbs etc. (27)."

Is it not perfectly clear from these verses that the *Brahma* (Supreme God) is the God whom knower, of theology worship, and in Him reside the thirty-three *devas* (performing their own functions) ?

Here even the NIRUKTAKARA makes this view clear :—

माहाभाग्याद्देवताया एक आत्मा बहुधासूयते एकस्यात्मनोऽन्ये देवा
प्रत्यंगानि भवन्ति । .कर्म जन्मान आत्मजन्मान आत्मैवैषारथो भवति
आत्माऽथा आत्मायुधमात्मेषव आत्मा सर्वं देवस्य देवस्य ॥ निरु० ७, ४

"Leaving off all other *devas* it is only the Supreme Soul that is worshipped, on account of Its Omipotence. Other *devatas* are but the *praty-angas* of this Supreme Soul, that is, they but partially manifest the glory of God. All these *devas* owe their birth and power to Him. In Him they have their play. Through Him they exercise their beneficial influences, by attracting properties useful and repelling properties injurious. He alone is the All in All of all the *devas*."

Still clearer and stronger passage we find in SHATAPATHA :—

आत्मेवेवोपासीत । ॥ स योन्यमात्मनः प्रियं ब्रूयात् प्रियं रोष्यती
 तीत्यरोह तथैव स्यादात्मानमेव प्रियमुपासीत स य आत्मानमेव प्रियमुपासते
 न हास्य प्रियं प्रभायुक्तं भवति । योन्यां देवतामुपास्ते न स वेद यथा
 पशुरिव स देवानाम् ॥ श० कां० १४, ४

“ *Atma* (Supreme God) alone is to be worshipped. If any one says that besides *Atma* anything else might be adored with love and devotion, tell him that he will always be miserable and will weep. A worshipper of God enjoys bliss, and he who worships any other thing, knowing it to be God, he does not know anything and is said among the *devas* (learned) to be a beast.”

These Rishis understood the Vedas in this light, and not only advocated monotheism, pure and simple, but discarded the worship of any other being as God. What more is required to establish *monotheism*.?

However, before we close this point it will not be out of place to quote here a few opinions of Western scholars.

H. T. Colebrooke says :—

“The deities invoked appear on a cursory inspection of the Vedas to be as various as the authors

of the prayers addressed to them, but according to the most ancient annotations on the Indian Scripture those numerous names of persons and things are all resolvable into different titles of three deities, and ultimately of one God.

"The *Nighantu* or Glossary of the Vedas conclude with three lists of names of deities, the first comprising such as are deemed synonymous with fire, the second with air, and the third with the sun. In the last part of the *Nirukta* which entirely relates to deities, it is twice asserted, that there are but three Gods "*Tisre eva devatah.*" The further inference that these imply but one deity is supported by many passages in the Vedas, and it is very clearly and concisely stated in the beginning of the Index to the Rig Veda on the authority of the *Nirukta* and of the Veda itself. It shows (what is also deducible from texts of the Indian Scripture translated in the present and former essays) that the ancient Hindu religion, as founded on the Indian Scripture, recognises but one God."

Says Charles Coleman in Mythology of the Hindus:—"The religion of the Hindu sages, as inculcated by the Veda, is the belief in and worship of one Great and only God, Omnipotent, Omniscent, and Omnipresent, of whose attributes, he

expresses his ideas in the most awful terms. These attributes he conceives are allegorically (and allegorically only) represented by three personified powers of creation, preservation and destruction."

Revd. Garrett in his Bhagawat Gita :—

"These truly sublime ideas cannot fail to convince us that the Vedas recognise only one God who is almighty, infinite, eternal, self-existent, the high and Lord of the Universe.

"I add only one hymn in which the idea of one God is expressed with such power and decision, that it will make us hesitate before we deny the Aryan nations an instinctive monotheism."

Even Max Muller writes :—

"In the same hymn one verse occurs which boldly declares the existence of but one Divine Being though invoked under different names. (Rig Veda 1-164-46) "They call him *Indra*, *Mitrà*, *Varuna*, *Agni*; then he is the well-winged heavenly *Garutman*, that which is one the wise call it many ways, call it *Agni*, *Yama*, *Matrisvan*."

CONCLUSION.

We think we have succeeded in establishing that the word *deva* cannot everywhere be translated into God. We have a clear admission of Prof : Max Muller also on this point which we quote :—

"In Sanskrit there are several derivatives of *div*, such as *diva* (neuter), sky, or day ; *Divasa* (m. n.) sky and day ; *divya*, heavenly ; *dina* (m. n.) day.

"If lastly we raise *div* by *Guna*, we get the Sanskrit *deva*, originally bright, afterwards god. It is curious that this, the Etymological meaning of *deva*, is passed over in the dictionary of Bochtlingk and Roth. *It is clearly passed over intentionally and in order to show that in all the passages where deva occurs in the Veda it may be translated by god or divine.* That it may be so translated would be difficult to disprove ; but that there are many passages where the original meaning of bright is more appropriate, can easily be established. R. V. I. 50. 8. The seven *Harits* (horses) carry thee on thy chariot, brilliant (*deva*) Sun, thee with flaming hair, O far-seeing :"

(Science of Languages Vol. II pp. 497 and 498).

We can very fairly deduce from the above quotation that

(1) some authors have intentionally passed over the etymological meaning of *deva* ;

(2) they wanted to show that in all passages *deva* may be translated by God or Divine ; and,

(3) there are passages where etymological meaning is more appropriate.

Should we also say that Prof : Max Muller knew that etymologically *deva* means only bright ? Having PANINI before us, giving so many root meanings, are we to induce ourselves to believe that the Professor had not read PANINI and did not know the other root meanings of *diva* ? Had he not consulted NIRUKTA ? But we find him referring to PANINI and NIRUKTA in his writings ! Are we then to infer that he intentionally passed over the other root meanings ? We cannot be found fault with if we draw this inference, rather we would be perfectly justified in so inferring. We have shown that the priests are called *devas*, and the organs of senses are called *devas*. Do the priests shine ? Do the organs of senses shine ? Are they bright ? So we have to admit that there are passages where one or other of the different root meanings are more appropriate. And what we have said

above is sufficiently borne out. We may at once say, without the least hesitation or fear of contradiction that *devas* should not always be translated into Gods, nay, it would be a mistake to do so. We would be disfiguring the meanings of many passages by always, indiscriminately rendering *devas* into Gods.

We may be excused for asserting that Western Scholars have no right to ignore the authorities of PANINI and YASKA, they should not have passed over the rules of interpreting the Vedic *mantras*. It was certainly not fair to put their own meanings putting aside *Unadi Kosha* and *Nighantu* and then found their criticisms on their self-created theories. The word *deva* is a generic term used for denoting all sorts of things having useful and brilliant attributes, and if by misuse or ignorance of the real meanings, or by association of wrong notions the term has been given a limited construction, or is supposed to create an idea of worship, it is no fault of the Vedas or their Author.

It is quite true that *deva* has in itself an inherent idea of divinity but why, one who can see deeper, can see, the Supreme God, the All-pervading Divinity, in all things and indeed every particle of this Universe! Every being, every atom

notify the glory of His powers ; every thing exists in Him and He pervades every thing ! Nothing can exist without Him, all *devas* reside in Him ! The *Surya* (Sun) gives us light, but who gives light to the *Surya* ! He who gives light to the *Surya* is the Great *Surya* ! Is He not the *Surya* of the *Suryas* ? He is the real, unchangeable life and light of the whole universe ! *Vayu* is derived from *Va*=to move, and *Vayu* is wind because it moves about and moves others. But who is the Prime-mover ? Who is it that moves the wind, nay the whole universe ? The Great God ! And so He is the real *Vayu* ! *Indra* means king or Sun, from *idi*=power, but who is the source of all powers ? Certainly the All-powerful, the Almighty ! He really is the King of kings ! He is therefore, the real *Indra* ! In the great *pralaya* (dissolution) this sun that gives us light today will be nowhere, will cease to exist, the wind will cease to blow, the kings and sovereigns will no more reign over any kingdom, for kingdoms there will be none. But God will exist with all the powers of light, wind, and all, concentrated in Him. All manifestations of His powers that we now see in the sun, the moon, the wind, the king and every thing, will,

during dissolution, find resting place in Him ! Why, all the material portions of the sun etc. will be reduced to atoms, the outer covering will cease to exist form except in its atomic form the form from which the universe evolved, just as the whole tree remains hidden in a seed. God "the life and light of all this wondrous world" alone will remain unchanged and unaltered, and after the period of dissolve evolve the universe again.

God being the fountain of all powers is here and there addressed in the Vedas by His one attribute or another ; somewhere as *Indra*, somewhere as *Agni* &c. All objects of the universe are also described in the Vedas but wherever the idea of worship is expressed He alone is meant. Where the material objects are described by terms containing one attribute, nowhere in the Veda such objects are meant or said to be worshipped. Those only will be confounded who start with the theory that *Indra* is a particular deity, *Agni* is another, *Soma* is third, and so on ; but one who knows that they are the names of the same God will never be confounded to find that *Indra*, *Agni*, *Soma*, and such others are each said to be the Greatest God. Yes, these are mere different names of God, because God

possesses collectively all the qualities that the root-meanings of these terms convey. Yes, there are separate and distinct *devas* also when used in their limited root-meanings because each separately possesses the said qualities. By the bye, why one should be surprised to read the expression "*Surya deva*" and take it to express that *Surya* is said to be God, when we even now in common parlance find a man addressing another gentlemen, not his father, as Father Hoffman nay, addressing a river as Father Thames and his country as Mother India !

May Mahadeva give us light of knowledge.

Amen !


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